

## Town hall event explores ways to increase research funding

By Kristen Ryan

Students, faculty, and research professionals from local institutions gathered Sept. 2 at the Research Triangle Park headquarters in Durham, North Carolina, for the first public event organized by the newly reinstated North Carolina Triangle Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience. They met to discuss a growing concern over federal research funding and science policy. Representative David Price, D-N.C. was one of the speakers.

Shannon Farris, Ph.D., an NIEHS postdoc and chapter representative, led the effort this summer to bring back the Triangle chapter, which has rapidly grown to more than 100 members. “Reactivating the chapter will provide a central place for scientists and the community to come together, and an opportunity to inform the public and our legislators how neuroscience research benefits our society,” she said.

Members represent area universities, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), North Carolina State University, and Duke University, as well as local research organizations, such as RTI International and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Along with Farris, several other NIEHS and National Toxicology Program (NTP) faculty and postdocs involved with neuroscience research are members of the chapter, including President-elect Patricia Jensen, Ph.D., a lead researcher at NIEHS, and Secretary-treasurer Mamta Behl, Ph.D., an NTP toxicologist, who were part of the organizing committee for the event.

### Communicating the value of scientific research

Chapter President Amir Rezvani, Ph.D., a professor at Duke University, introduced Price, who is a member of the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, where he promotes funding for research. Price was named a Champion of Science in 2002 by the [Science Coalition](http://www.sciencecoalition.org/) (<http://www.sciencecoalition.org/>), and recognized as Legislator of the Year in 2011 by the [Biotechnology Industry Organization](http://www.bio.org/media/press-release/congressman-price-honored-bio-legislator-year) (<http://www.bio.org/media/press-release/congressman-price-honored-bio-legislator-year>).

In his speech, Price discussed his most recent amendment proposal to increase funds for the National Science Foundation for fiscal year 2015. Despite strong bipartisan support for biomedical research, the proposal was not adopted. “There is no clear way to pay for such increases, which speaks to a larger dilemma regarding the need for a comprehensive fiscal plan to balance the budget,” he explained.

After a lively question and answer period, the meeting concluded with a reception that allowed the audience to continue discussions about federal support for research and learn more about the Triangle Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience.

The importance of supporting scientific research will also be a main topic during an upcoming visit to NIEHS by Rep. Renee Ellmers, R-N.C., in October. The majority of NIEHS employees reside in the districts represented by Price and Ellmers.

(Kristen Ryan, Ph.D., is an Intramural Research Training Award fellow in the NTP Systems Toxicology Group.)



*Farris is a member of the NIEHS Synaptic and Developmental Plasticity Group. She is one of several scientists from the Laboratory of Neurobiology and NTP who are members of the Triangle Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*Rezvani is a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences who studies alcohol and nicotine addiction at Duke. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*Edward Levin, Ph.D., Duke University professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, asked a question that was on the mind of many people at the event. "How can we get together with local and federal government to look at the long view of research in the RTP area?" (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*Triangle chapter members joined Price following the town hall meeting. Shown, from left, are Leah Townsend, a UNC doctoral student; Behl; Chintan Oza, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow at Duke University; Rezvani; Price; Farris; Charlotte Boettiger, Ph.D., an assistant professor at UNC; and Jensen. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*

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